

Message Text

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CINCPAC HONOLULU

COMUSMACTHAI BANGKOK

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CINCPAC ALSO FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR MARR TH US

SUBJECT: EFFECTS OF THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT ON
RESIDUAL MILITARY PRESENCE NEGOTIATIONS

REF: BANGKOK 0641

SUMMARY: MFA AMERICA DIVISION CHIEF WORAPHUT CHAIYANAM SAYS
THAT THE DISSOLUTION OF PARLIAMENT SHOULD NOT SERIOUSLY
DISRUPT CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS ON THE RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY
PRESENCE IN THAILAND. END SUMMARY

1. WORAPHUT TOLD AN EMBASSY OFFICER JANUARY 14 IN THE COURSE
OF A DISCUSSION OF OTHER ISSUES THAT HE DID NOT BELIEVE THE
DISSOLUTION OF THE THAI HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES JAN 12,
AND THE CARETAKER STATUS OF THE RTG, WOULD SERIOUSLY
INTERFERE WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S ABILITY TO MAKE THE
NECESSARY DECISIONS ON THE LONG-TERM U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE.
HE SAID THAT MOST PENDING POLICY DECISIONS WERE ALREADY

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COVERED BY PREVIOUS OFFICIAL PUBLIC STATEMENTS (AND

THEREFORE BY IMPLICATION FELL INTO THE ROUTINE BUSINESS CATEGORY). HE DID SAY, HOWEVER, THAT THE FINAL AGREEMENTS WOULD HAVE TO BE MUCH MORE EXPLICIT THAN HAS BEEN THE PRACTICE HERETOFORE. HE SAID IT WAS THE UNWRITTEN, TACIT UNDERSTANDINGS THAT MADE TROUBLE FOR THE RTG WHEN THE PRESS OR THE PARLIAMENT BEGAN TO INVESTIGATE THEM.

2. WORAPHUT WENT ON TO SAY THAT HE BELIEVED THAILAND'S NEW AND MORE PRECARIOUS SECURITY SITUATION NOW MADE THE THAI PUBLIC MUCH MORE WILLING THAN IT WAS A YEAR AGO TO ACCEPT A RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE. AT THE SAME TIME HE POINTED OUT THAT THE MARCH 20 WITHDRAWAL DEADLINE COINCIDED WITH THE LAST TWO WEEKS OF THE ELECTION CAMPAIGN. THE FINAL DECISIONS ON WHAT WOULD REMAIN AFTER THE DEADLINE WOULD RECEIVE INTENSE POLITICAL AND PRESS SCRUTINY.

3. IN RESPONSE TO AN OBSERVATION THAT WHAT WOULD REMAIN WOULD LARGEY BE INTELLIGENCE FACILITIES, WORAPHUT SAID HE SAW NO NEED TO BE UNDULY SPECIFIC AS TO THEIR PRECISE ACTIVITIES. WHEN WE MENTIONED THE U-2'S BY NAME, WORAPHUT SAID THAT HE HAD HEARD NOTHING TO LEAD HIM TO INFER THAT THE GOVERNMENT'S CARETAKER STATUS WOULD INFLUENCE ITS FINAL DECISION ON THE U-2'S ONE WAY OR THE OTHER. HE SAID THAT THE THAI MILITARY WOULD HAVE TO DETERMINE WHAT U.S. ACTIVITIES WERE IN THAILAND'S INTEREST, AND THAT THE GOVERNMENT (INCLUDING - EVIDENTLY - MFA) WOULD ABIDE BY THE MINISTRY OF DEFENSE DECISION. HE CONCLUDED THIS PORTION OF THE DISCUSSION BY PRAISING GEN. SAIYUT KOETPHON'S HIGH QUALIFICATIONS FOR AND BALANCED APPROACH TO THE BILATERAL NEGOTIATIONS.

4. COMMENT: WHILE WORAPHUT IS A SINGLE SOURCE FOR THE ABOVE INFORMATION AT THIS TIME, HE IS BOTH CAUTIOUS AND WELL INFORMED ON THE SUBJECT. IT IS SIGNIFICANT AND HEARTENING THAT EVEN MFA HAS NOT SEIZED ON THE NEW SITUATION AS AN EXCUSE TO GO MUSHY AND EVASIVE ON THE MANY TICKLISH POLICY DECISIONS ON THE RESIDUAL U.S. MILITARY PRESENCE STILL FACING THE RTG. WE WILL BE PROBING THIS QUESTION FURTHER IN THE DAYS TO COME, AND WILL HAVE A CLEARER IDEA OF THE RTG STANCE AS NEGOTIATIONS PROCEED.

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WHITEHOUSE

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